

Humanities

Description of the Examination

The General Examination in Humanities tests general knowledge of literature, art, and music. It is broad in its coverage, with questions on all periods from classical to contemporary and in many different fields: poetry, prose, philosophy, history of art, music, dance, and theater. The exam requires candidates to demonstrate their understanding of the humanities through recollection of specific information, comprehension and application of concepts, and analysis and interpretation of various works of art.

Because the exam is very broad in its coverage, any one person is unlikely to be equally proficient in all the fields it covers. The exam is 90 minutes long and includes approximately 150 multiple-choice questions to be answered in two separately timed 45-minute sections.

For candidates with satisfactory scores on the Humanities exam, colleges may grant up to six semester hours (or the equivalent) of credit toward fulfillment of a distribution requirement. Some may grant credit for a particular course that matches the exam in content.

Knowledge and Skills Required

Questions on the test require candidates to demonstrate one or more of the following abilities.

Knowledge of factual information such as names, works, etc. (about 50 percent of the exam)

Recognition of techniques such as rhyme scheme, medium, and matters of style, and ability to identify them as characteristic of certain writers, artists, schools, or periods (about 30 percent of the exam)

Understanding and interpretation of literary passages and art works (provided in reproductions) that most candidates probably will not have seen before (about 20 percent of the exam)

The subject matter of the General Examination in Humanities is drawn from the following topics.

Approximate Percent of Examination

50%	Fine Arts
25%	Visual arts (painting, sculpture, etc.)
15%	Music
5%	Performing arts (film, dance, etc.)
5%	Architecture
50%	Literature
5-10%	Drama
15-20%	Poetry
10-15%	Fiction

5-10%

Nonfiction

5%

Philosophy

The exam questions, drawn from the entire history of Western art and culture, are fairly evenly divided among the following periods: Classical, Medieval and Renaissance, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, nineteenth century, and twentieth century. In addition, some questions draw on non-Western cultures, such as those of Africa and Asia. Some of the questions cross disciplines and/or chronological periods, and a substantial number test knowledge of terminology, genre, and style.

Study Resources

To do well on the Humanities exam, you should know something about each of the forms of literature and fine arts from the various periods and cultures listed earlier, in the paragraph immediately above. No single book covers all these areas, so it will be necessary for you to refer to college textbooks, supplementary reading, and references for introductory courses in literature and fine arts at the college level. You can find these books in most college bookstores.

In addition to reading, a lively interest in the arts -- going to museums and concerts, attending plays, seeing motion pictures, watching public television programs such as "Great Performances" and "Masterpiece Theatre," and listening to radio stations that play classical music and feature discussions of the arts -- constitutes excellent preparation. The Internet is another resource you could explore.